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Coordination questions: draft system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 2002-2005

Letter dated 24 May 2001 from the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women to the Chairperson of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

In my capacity as Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, I have the honour of bringing to your attention the results of the forty-fifth session of the Commission that might be pertinent to the upcoming session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination under agenda item 5 (c) on coordination questions: draft system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 2002-2005.

Please be informed that the Commission on the Status of Women reviewed the proposed plan and, during its resumed forty-fifth session, adopted resolution 45/3 thereon on 11 May 2001 (see annex I).

The Commission on the Status of Women also invited Member States to make comments on the plan. Comments were received from five Member States. Summaries of these comments, which will be included in an annex to the report of the Commission, are also attached (see annex II).

I wish you every success for the session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

(*Signed*) Dubravka **Simonovic**
Chairperson
Commission on the Status of Women

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Annex I

Resolution 45/3 entitled "Comments on the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002-2005", adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women on 11 May 2001 at its resumed forty-fifth session

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/34 of 25 July 1996, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, to formulate a new system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women to cover the period 2002-2005, to submit the new draft plan to the Council at its substantive session of 2000 in order to provide guidance for the medium-term plans of the individual organizations of the United Nations system and to submit the draft plan to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fourth session, for comments,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/16 of 28 July 1999, in which the Council invited the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, to formulate the plan for 2002-2005 in two phases — a first phase consisting of an assessment of activities undertaken by the United Nations system and of obstacles encountered and lessons learned from the present plan and the system-wide process of its implementation, and the second phase consisting of a new plan that reflects the growing emphasis on action and delivery,

Recognizing the role of the Economic and Social Council in overseeing the system-wide coordination in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action[1] and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly,[2]

Recalling that Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly,

Recalling also that the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly need to be implemented through the work of all of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system as an integral part of system-wide programming,

Recognizing that the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly call upon the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to strengthen their support for actions at the national level and to enhance their contributions to coordinated follow-up by the United Nations and upon each organization to set out the specific actions that it will undertake, including goals and targets to realign priorities and redirect resources to meet the global priorities identified in the Beijing

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[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[2] General Assembly resolutions S-23/2, annex, and S-23/3, annex.

Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly, with a clear delineation of responsibility and accountability, all of which should be reflected in the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002-2005, and stressing in this connection the need for appropriate mechanisms for coordination and cooperation,

Aware that the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly stress that the responsibility for ensuring their implementation and the integration of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system must rest at the highest levels,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002-2005;[3]

2. *Stresses* that the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002-2005 should be an effective instrument for promoting the coordinated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly;

3. *Recommends* the adoption of the revised draft plan by the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the present resolution and comments of the Commission on the Status of Women as well as those of the Committee for Programme and Coordination;

4. *Stresses* the importance of gender mainstreaming, including institutional follow-up and capacity-building;

5. *Emphasizes* the importance of a coherent approach to the actions planned to address the strategic objectives spelt out under each critical area of concern, as well as of incorporating a gender perspective into policies and programmes of entities of the United Nations system;

6. *Recommends* that the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002-2005 serve as a monitoring and coordination tool at all levels for system-wide progress in implementing actions under each critical area of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly;

7. *Stresses* the importance of involving all parts of the United Nations in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly;

8. *Invites* the United Nations bodies that meet under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to discuss regularly progress made in implementing activities under each area of critical concern, taking into account the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women for 2002-2005 and of the Economic and Social Council, and to provide up-to-date information in those areas to the Council through the Commission, taking into consideration the comments made on the plan by the Commission and other relevant bodies;

[3] E/CN.6/2001/4.

9. *Recommends* that the Economic and Social Council, through the Commission on the Status of Women, follow up the implementation of the plan and undertake a comprehensive mid-term review of the implementation of the plan in 2004 as a basis for future programming and coordination of activities for the advancement and empowerment of women by the United Nations system, including a review of the progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in all activities of the United Nations system;

10. *Invites* the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council for its consideration the revised draft plan, and the comments of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, along with the comments of the Commission;

11. *Recommends* that the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality use the revised plan and the respective comments on it as a basis for monitoring increasing collaboration and cost-effective approaches to United Nations system activities for the advancement and empowerment of women, including assessment of methods for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all United Nations activities, ensuring accountability and carrying out impact analyses of gender-sensitive programmes and policies;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all United Nations activities system-wide, including in decision-making, as part of the accountability of senior managers;

13. *Also requests* the Secretary-General, in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, to integrate a gender perspective in budgetary decisions on policies and programmes and to assure adequate financing of specific programmes for securing equality between women and men;

14. *Recommends* that the Economic and Social Council request formulation of a new system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women to cover the period 2006-2010, that the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, submit the new draft plan to the Council at its substantive session of 2005 in order to provide guidance to the medium-term plans of the individual organizations of the United Nations system and that the proposal draft be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session, for comments.

Annex II

Comments by some Member States of the Commission on the Status of Women on the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002-2005

1. Comments should be obtained on achievements and obstacles in the implementation of previous plans within the United Nations system and in mainstreaming gender in various fields including institutional capacity-building.

2. A more analytical approach should be used in the plan to identify obstacles in order to translate gender into practical strategies and actions and to ensure more effective monitoring and accountability as regards gender mainstreaming, including the development and use of indicators and identification of good practices.

3. More efforts should be made to ensure that concrete recommendations and actions to address obstacles and constraints identified in the assessment are fully integrated in the new plan so as to improve the effectiveness of activities undertaken by the United Nations system.

4. Further and intensified measures should be taken to ensure that all parts of the United Nations system input into the actions of this plan.

5. The plan should contain information on gender mainstreaming from all United Nations entities that are responsible for the achievement of the objectives of the Platform for Action and outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Further efforts should be made to include actions from all such entities including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

6. The system-wide medium-term plan should cover the implementation of the institutional and financial arrangements of the Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as this would provide for a systemic approach to gender mainstreaming.

7. A more comprehensive approach should be used to integrate relevant decisions of other intergovernmental forums into the system-wide medium-term plan in the framework of an integrated and coordinated conference follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits.

8. The plan should further articulate the ways in which the system is working with non-governmental organizations, particularly women's organizations and civil society.

9. In the area of education and training of women, actions should be identified with respect to literacy. Further efforts should be made to avoid duplication and to provide for improved coordination, and for exchange of information as regards lessons learned.

10. The wording "pregnant girls" as used in paragraph 97 in the system-wide medium-term plan should be replaced by "pregnant adolescents".

11. In the area of women and health, information on efforts to reduce maternal mortality should be included.

12. In the area of violence against women, in particular trafficking in women, information from the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention should be included.

13. In paragraph 116, a more comprehensive list on violence against women, which includes all forms of violence as reflected in the Platform for Action and outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, should be provided.

14. In the area of women and armed conflict, given the prevalence of gender-based violence in refugee camps, more information on actions to be undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should be reflected, including evaluation of its guidelines on the protection of refugee women. Also, activities being undertaken with respect to internally displaced women and girls should be included.

15. As regards the girl child in the areas of armed conflict and refugees, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and other relevant United Nations

entities dealing with children should be encouraged to provide information.

16. Reporting of activities by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as it relates specifically to the protection of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed conflict should be promoted.

17. In the area of women and the economy, more information on action to be taken to secure land rights for women should be included.

18. In the area of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, national machineries should be continuously strengthened through gender training and support from the women's movement.

19. In the area of human rights of women, more information on action taken regarding legal literacy should be included.

20. Public awareness programmes about the human rights of women should focus on principles as contained in relevant consensus documents rather than the vague notion of "violations that continue to persist" as indicated in paragraph 168.

21. The wording "equal inheritance" is not used in the Platform for Action and should not be used in the system-wide medium-term plan.

22. In paragraph 171, the list of discriminatory practices should be deleted or a complete list from relevant agreed documents should be adopted.

23. In the area of women and the media, a balanced allocation of programmes should be reached.

24. In the area of women and the environment, more information by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, which plays a critical role in this area as it relates to the development of programmes and infrastructures that are gender-sensitive in responding to disasters and emergency situations, should be included.

25. In the reference to the secure tenure campaign in paragraph 169, the focus should be on changing negative stereotypes rather than "values".

26. Operational activities and advisory services of the United Nations entities should be designed in consultation with and delivered at the request of Member States.

27. The activities of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention described under paragraph 90 should be included under the critical area of concern, Women and health, specifically after paragraph 103.

28. The Spanish translation should be reviewed to ensure correct usage of certain terms.

29. The United Nations Development Fund for Women should be encouraged to pay more attention to the development aspects in the programmed activities related to the use of new information and communication technologies.

30. Since the ratification of certain international instruments is the prerogative of Member States, this should be reflected in paragraph 120.

31. The titles in reference to the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women should be revised in accordance with the programme of work of the Commission as adopted at its forty-fifth session.

32. The proposed system-wide medium-term plan gives special attention to the importance of the development of indicators, databases and statistics, in the work of the organizations of the United Nations. These should not restrict Member States from developing other relevant country-specific indicators and measurement tools.